

SESSION 3

WORK

Nehemiah 3 / Personal Study

Opening Prayer

Gracious Father, incline my heart to Your testimonies. Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things in Your Word. Unite my heart to fear Your name and satisfy me with Your steadfast love. I ask this by Your Spirit and through Your Son.

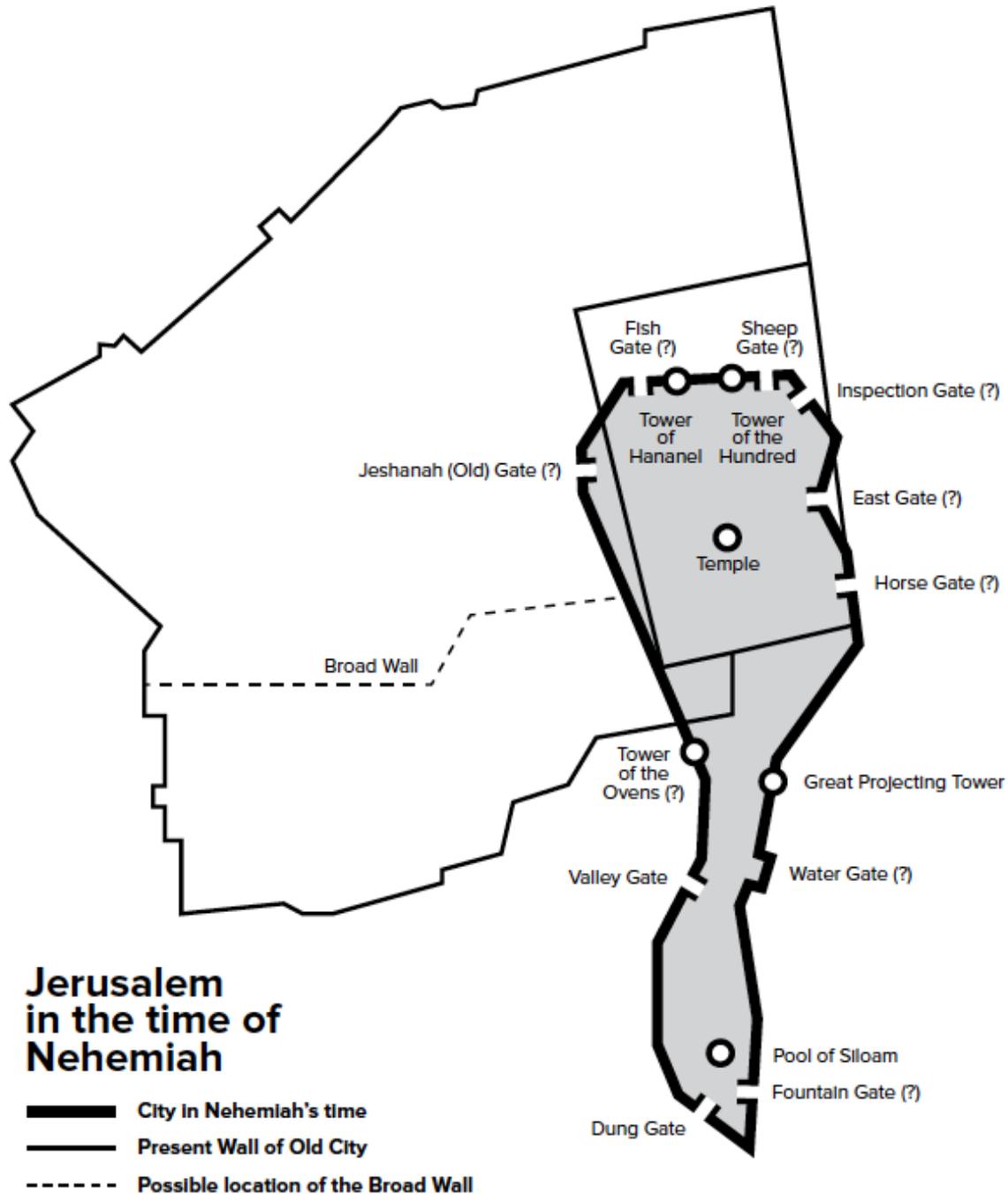
Introduction

Nehemiah is a book about building. After learning about the scope of the problem and the potential for opposition, we at last come to the moment where the workers assemble and the good work begins.

During the darkest hours of World War II, Winston Churchill issued a now-famous call to the British people to rise up in the face of great opposition. He laid before them the bleakness of their situation and issued a call to unity and great effort, exhorting them to action with the pronouncement, "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat." Nehemiah, after surveying the rubble of Jerusalem's walls, issues a similar call to his people: "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision." He gives no promise of fame or prosperity, no special accommodations for the wealthy or the powerful, just a call for all to come and build. And build they do, placing themselves along the walls and working steadily to restore the good name of their God.

Read Nehemiah 3 and answer the following questions.

1. Nehemiah lists the names of those who helped rebuild the city wall. Below is a map of Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah. On the map, number each location in the order it is mentioned. What do you learn about Nehemiah’s system for recording the work?



2. Nehemiah details interesting facts about those who built the wall. Skim through the chapter and note which of the following types of people helped build:

- Goldsmiths
- Priests
- Homeowners
- Local residents
- Perfumers
- Rulers
- Daughters
- Out-of-towners
- Merchants
- Levites
- Sons

3. What conclusion can you draw from the varied nature of the builders with regard to:

- Nehemiah's recruitment skills?
- His leadership skills?
- The dedication of the people?
- The favour of God?

4. Is everyone in the area eager to help with the building? Who refrains from joining the project (3:5)?

What is their motive for not participating?

Nehemiah could have left out this detail. Why does he include it?

5. What idea is repeated in vv. 1, 3, 6, 13, 14 and 15? How many gates stood without any type of door or lock? Look back at your map. How many gates total did Jerusalem have? What practical problems do you think this presented for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the keepers of the recently rebuilt temple?

6. Take a few minutes to read and reflect on Psalm 62. How does this psalm expand on the picture of God's faithfulness in the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem?

7. Nehemiah shows great attention to the contributions of specific people in chapter 3. Whom do you receive help from who would be blessed by your recognition of their efforts?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, You are our strong fortress, our tower, our refuge. It pleases You to involve us in the work of Your kingdom. May we be quick to respond to the call to build. May we build humbly and willingly at our appointed place. May our voices not be raised among the opposition. May they not be lifted among the proud. May they be joined with those of the saints of all ages who have boldly proclaimed, "Let us rise up and build." Amen.

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Nehemiah 3 / group Study

Answer the following questions:

1. What thoughts do you have based upon this week's personal study?
2. What stood out to you? What challenged you? What prompted questions?
Read Nehemiah 3 and answer the following questions.
3. Rather than carefully record names and details about the builders of the wall, Nehemiah could have simply written, "And many people from all walks of life rose up to rebuild the wall." Why do you think the Spirit prompted him to include these details?

What can we learn about God from this careful listing?
4. Nehemiah employs workers from all walks of life – those who would have been suited to heavy labour and those who would have not. Have you ever been tempted to avoid a necessary but unpleasant ministry task with the excuse, "That's not really my area of gifting"? Is such an excuse valid?
5. The life of a believer is the life of a builder. What building project does Jesus describe in Matthew 7:24-27? What is the foundation? The building?
6. Whose less-than-best words are we tempted to use as the foundation for our lives? What less-than-best building materials do we choose to construct our lives?
7. What well-known building project is described in Genesis 11:1-9? Contrast the motives of its builders with those in Nehemiah 3.
8. How many names and details about the builders of the tower of Babel are recorded? What lesson can we draw from this?

9. What kind of a builder are you? Do you build your life to make a name for yourself or to make much of the name of God? How should the way believers handle money, relationships and time reflect their desire to build God's kingdom rather than their own?

Guide to Prayer

- *Thank the Father that He knows you by name. Thank Him for uniquely gifting you and placing you to build at your appointed spot.*
- *Ask the Lord to give you the patience, compassion and humility to work well with your fellow builders of God's kingdom. Ask Him to help you love them as you love yourself.*
- *Confess to the Lord where you have attempted to build a name for yourself. Ask Him to make His Name the motivation for and object of all of your efforts.*

LEADER GUIDE

SESSION 3

Work / Nehemiah 3

1. Personal response

2. Personal response

3. God cares about individuals. He knows our names and assigns us our portion. He chooses men and women of high and low station, from all walks of life to do the work of building His kingdom.

4. This may be a valid excuse if there are others better equipped and able and willing to do the task. In Nehemiah's situation, there was no one else to do the work, so primary skill sets were set aside for the sake of necessity. There are times when we set aside our primary skill sets to meet a pressing need. We must never use our gifting as an excuse to avoid an undesirable task. The foundation is the gospel. The building (house) is our character.

- Philippians 2:1-4 – unity of mind, unity of love, humility, self-sacrifice
- Colossians 3:12-17 – compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, love, peace, thankfulness, the Word
- Hebrews 10:24-25 – community, encouragement
- 1 Peter 3:8 – unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, a humble mind

We might base our lives on the words of men instead of the words of God. We might build our lives out of things of no eternal significance rather than things that last.

5. The Tower of Babel: The men of Babel built to make a name for themselves. The people of Judea built to make known the name of God. No names are recorded. If we seek to make a name for ourselves, our names will be forgotten. If we seek to make known the name of God, our names will be remembered for eternity.

6. Personal response